

EXPLORE!

Tour Notes



Belarus Explorer (MI 2015)



TOUR DURATION
10
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Busy

Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard

tour Code: MI

Tour Highlights - Belarus Explorer

- ✓ Cultural gems - Explore the rich history of Hrodna (Grodno), Polotsk and Vitebsk
- ✓ Castles - Visit the fortresses of Nesvizh, Mir and Brest
- ✓ Berezinsky National Park - Hiking through some of the most pristine landscapes in Belarus
- ✓ Minsk - The Belarus capital: a superb example of Soviet urban planning

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: 9 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals: 9 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 2 dinners
Start Point: Join tour: Warsaw Airport
End Point: Tour ends: Warsaw
Transport: Bus
Countries: Poland, Belarus

Belarus Explorer

Join us to explore the villages, forests and historic cities of Belarus and eastern Poland. We walk in the Berezinsky National Park and visit the town of Vitebsk - home to the artist Marc Chagall. We also tour the Belarus capital Minsk and visit the 19th century Russian fortress at Brest.



Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Busy

There may be early starts, long journeys and tiring days along the way, but you'll return home feeling you've really experienced as much as you possibly could.



Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Warsaw airport (Poland) and drive to Bialystok

Our adventure begins at Warsaw airport, from where we drive to the north-eastern town of Bialystok on the banks of the Biala River. The largest city in the region, Bialystok lies at the heart of Belarusian culture in Poland and was a recent finalist for European Capital of Culture. Home to a number of museums and parks, the city also boasts one of the oldest puppet theatres in the country.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Drive through the Knyszynska Forest and onto Hrodna (Belarus)

Driving across the Bialystok Uplands this morning we head further east, travelling through the charming villages of the Knyszynska Forest. Stopping in the small communities of Bohoniki and Kruszyniany, we visit the unique wooden mosque that is still used today by the small Tartar population of the region, before continuing towards the Belarus border. Immigration formalities at the border may take around an hour to complete, after which we continue by road to the city of Hrodna (otherwise known as Grodno) on the Neman River.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Morning sightseeing in Hrodna; visit to the Augustow Canal

Home to one of the largest Catholic populations in the country, Hrodna is filled with a wonderful collection of medieval and baroque architecture, including the impressive Cathedral of St Francis Xavier and the unique Church of Saints Boris and Gleb; the only surviving example of Black Ruthenian architecture left in the area. We take a tour of the city this morning, before driving out to view the restored eastern section of the 19th century Augustow Canal on our way to the historic city of Lida.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Drive to Berezinsky National Park via Naroch Lake

We continue our eastward journey towards the forests and marshes of the Berezinsky National Park. Covering around 400 kilometres today, we will break our journey on the banks of Lake Naroch, the largest lake in Belarus. Covering nearly 80 square kilometres, the lake is home to pike, perch, eel and tench and its picturesque landscapes provide us with an ideal lunch stop before continuing the rest of the way to Berezinsky.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5 Hiking in Berezinsky National Park

Encompassing one of the largest areas of marshland left in Europe, the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve provides a haven for an incredible diversity of flora and fauna, including more than 780 herbaceous species, 34 species of fish, over 50 species of mammal and an impressive list of over 200 different birds. We have a full day hiking or you may choose to partake in optional canoeing through the park today, enjoying the natural and scenic beauty of one of the most pristine environments in the country.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6 Drive to Vitebsk via the historic town of Polotsk

Straddling the waters of the mighty Dvina, close to Belarus's border with neighbouring Russia, lies the thriving city of Vitebsk, birthplace of Marc Chagall, one of the most renowned painters of the 20th century. Driving to the city today, we pass through the historic town of Polotsk, a cultural gem that is one of the oldest Slavic towns in the region. Tracing its origins back to the 9th century, the town is home to no fewer than 130 historical and cultural monuments, including the 11th century Cathedral of St Sophia, providing us with a fascinating stop en route to Vitebsk

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 Drive to Minsk with a city tour on arrival

This morning we will drive south, heading towards the Belarusian capital of Minsk. Set on the banks of the Svislach River, the city was first settled by the Early East Slavs back in the 9th century AD. Trinity Suburb is one of oldest and most picturesque areas, which is perfect for strolling in, and Victory Square is the most famous part of the city and features a memorial to the fallen heroes of World War II. On arrival we'll enjoy a sightseeing tour of the city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Travel to Nesvizh and visit Nesvizh and Mir Castles

This morning we drive west towards Nesvizh. Along the way we'll stop at Mir Castle, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Construction began at the end of the 15th century and it has sections in Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque styles. We then continue to another UNESCO World Heritage Site, the impressive Nesvizh Castle, which has been home to the Radswill Family for over 400 years and is where we spend the night.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Visit Brest Fortress en route to Warsaw

Today we visit the 19th century fortress at Brest, once the largest in the old Russian Empire. An infamous prison during the Soviet trials of the 1930s, this immense fortress went on to achieve lasting fame when it became a symbol of Soviet resistance during the German invasion of Russia in 1941. After our visit we continue our drive across the border back into Poland and to the Polish capital of Warsaw to enjoy a final evening in the city before our departure tomorrow.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Tour ends Warsaw

Tour ends in Warsaw after breakfast.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Included Activities

This tour is designed to acquaint you with Belarus's highlights and to give you the opportunity to get to know this fascinating lesser known country better. There's so much to see and do during your time in Belarus and there's a lot of ground to cover, so please be prepared for the busy nature of this enthralling holiday.

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 9 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 2 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

EXPLORE! The Adventure Travel Experts available online 24/7

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Poland

Lunch £: 12.00

Dinner £: 20.00

Belarus

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 11.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Poland

Bottle of Beer £: 1.20

Water £: 0.80

Belarus

Bottle of Beer £: 1.85

Water £: 0.40

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow £30.00 for tipping on this tour.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Poland

ATM Availability: Available in all major cities

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are widely accepted in all major cities

Travellers Cheques: Easily exchanged.

Local Currency: Zloty

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Sterling, USD and Euros are all accepted at exchange offices and banks.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival

Belarus

ATM Availability: You might find it difficult to obtain money from some ATM machines using Maestro and Visa cards due to difficulties in reading the card.

Credit Card Acceptance: Restaurants and shops in major towns.

Travellers Cheques: Are difficult to cash on this tour.

Local Currency: Ruble

Recommended Currency for Exchange: USD or Euro

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

Poland: Visas not required by citizens of the UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

Belarus: Entry visas are required for UK citizens and need to be applied for in advance. A tourist voucher is required as part of your application and Explore will request this on your behalf. This is received and sent to you from 4- 6 weeks before departure.

You should ensure that your passport has at least six months' validity and two unused pages. All other nationalities should consult their relevant Embassy prior to departure for visa requirements.

Please note that Belarus Immigration Authority requires you to have medical insurance which is recognised by the government. You have the option to purchase such medical insurance at the border for 20 Zloty (approximately 5 Pounds) for a week.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Poland

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, polio and hepatitis A. Tickborne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Belarus

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Rabies, Tetanus, Tick-borne encephalitis, Tuberculosis and Typhoid. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Poland

Poland has a temperate, changeable climate. September and October are cooler and gradually become damper until late November when temperatures fall below freezing with snowfall, particularly in mountain areas. Cold temperatures last through to March, but are tolerable. Snow can lie for up to three months in the mountains.

Belarus

Belarusian climate is moderately continental, a transitional form from maritime to continental climate with mild and humid winters, warm summers and damp autumns. Average July temperatures range from +17 C to +18.5 C, January temperatures vary from -8 C to -4.5 C.

Clothing

We recommend taking lightweight clothes for during the day plus some warmer clothes for colder nights. Take a lightweight rain jacket and an umbrella. Ladies should take a headscarf, which may be required for entering some churches.

Equipment

Please carry a mosquito repellent with you for walk in the National Park.

Footwear

We recommend bringing comfortable shoes and sandals for relaxing and walking shoes for the walking tours and hiking.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and day pack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself. Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Poland

Population: 38,186,860

Size of Country: 312,685 sq km

Major Language: Polish

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Belarus

Population: 9,503,807

Size of Country: 207,595 sq km

Major Language: Belarusian

Religion: Orthodox

Time Difference to GMT: +3

Electric Supply & Plugs

Poland

2 Pin Round

Belarus

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditions, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- [The Travel Foundation](#)
Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- [Tourism Concern](#)
Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety>

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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